

Report from Asia:

Defeat by Default

Edward Hunter

IF WE SET OUT deliberately to discourage the people of Asia from joining our side, we couldn't improve on what we've been doing. This is not how it seems to Americans and Britons at home. But it is how our statements and deeds act on the vast Asian population.

Take the case of an author named Chen Han-po, who lived with his wife and son in a hut of mud, boxwood, and flattened tin cans, in a refugee section of Hong Kong. He went from office to office trying to

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*In our May issue THE MERCURY examined American policy in Korea and Yugoslavia. In July, Boris Shub went into the question of "Why America Is Losing World War III." Edward Hunter here continues this series of articles on American foreign policy by looking hard at our self-defeating actions in the Far East. Mr. Hunter, who recently returned from his post in Hong Kong, is a contributing editor to THE AMERICAN MERCURY.*

persuade editors and officials to help him expose and fight Communism. He was turned away as obviously suspect, and his writings were dismissed as sensationalism. "He must be a plant," they said, and even disbelieved his name. "If what he says is true, the Communists would kill him," they remarked with finality.

The Communists, ironically, were the only ones who took Chen Han-po at his word — they knew he was telling the truth. So they killed him.

Chen Han-po was a Chinese in his late thirties who managed to look neat in spite of poverty. Infrequent eating helped to keep him slim. *Peiping Today*, his first book, relates his experiences as a Communist Party operator assigned to the middle-of-the-road political parties, to manipulate them from the inside; this was part of perhaps the most

effective tactic used to hoodwink the Chinese intellectuals and our own liberals. He describes the new class privileges bitterly fought over by Red leaders, their streamlined cars and sex rivalries.

The Communists heard a rumor that he was finishing an even more detailed exposé, and assassinated him, in time, they thought, to shut him up. But he had handed two manuscripts to his publisher, the Freedom Press, a week before his murder. One was a play, *Underground Fire*, which describes the biting disillusionment that followed the first enthusiasm with which the Reds had been welcomed into Shanghai, and the resultant anti-Mao Tse-tung element that arose in party ranks.

The other posthumous manuscript was entitled *How I Served Mao Tse-tung's Gestapo*, the most detailed and damaging account ever given, with names and addresses, of the Communist cultural groups set up to control the Chinese people.

Yet Chen Han-po had been turned away by editors and correspondents presumably doing their utmost to expose just what he was exposing, and by educators and diplomats presumably eager to fight the menace he was fighting. When he — and there have been others like him — telephoned them for appointments, knocked at their doors, pleaded with them, they just couldn't bring themselves to believe his story. Igor Gouzenko, who exposed the Cana-

dian spy ring in 1945, for the first time providing irrefutable proof of the Russian government's complicity in espionage, had a similar experience. According to the Canadian government's findings, he was unable "to have anyone accept him seriously." Only the kindness of a next-door neighbor in hiding him saved the case from suppression.

WHAT IS the explanation for all this? Part of the reason is that we have created a vague idealization in our own minds of the people who ought to be fighting our enemy. They must be a combination of Jesus and Marx. Nobody with any of the ordinary human frailties is considered eligible. Part of the reason, too, is the heritage of decrying the "seeing of Reds under every bed," a practice that diverted our attention from so many Communist conspirators. We are willing to tackle the problem in theory, but when an actual case arises, we pick on any implausible point or doubtful detail to justify ourselves in rejecting the whole as false. Then, too, there is the guilt complex. So many shy away in practice from implementing what they scorned as "hysteria" in their own pasts; so many remember the time when they, too, thought Mao Tse-tung only an agrarian reformer and no real Communist.

And only the most naïve will insist that there are no longer any actual Communists and working fel-

low-travelers to exert their influence on behalf of the party.

Not only individuals but events are involved. During a hot interval on the Korean front, for instance, it might at least have been expected that we should welcome thankfully and discreetly any situation on Red China's borders that could divert Chinese Communist troops from Korea and give Peiping a two-front scare.

But when a Chinese force was discovered preparing to harass Red China from bases in Upper Burma, our own side raised as much of a fuss about it as if an enemy had taken the field against us. Reuters news agency, represented in Burma by its Indian affiliate, ran long exposés of the so-called invasion; these reports were picked up and publicized, especially in the Far East and southeast Asia.

The British government promptly asked, on Burma's behalf, that the United Nations send a commission to investigate the matter on the spot. Burma as promptly denied that she had made any such request. English sources in Rangoon told me that the initiative had not come from there, but from London. "We were as surprised by it as the Burmese," they informed me. "May I ask my honorable friend what responsibility he has for the government of Burma?" a bewildered member of Britain's Parliament asked the Foreign Office spokesman. For a government such as Britain's,

so ticklish about protocol and the prerogatives of sovereignty, to have acted in this way, was to give Asia a demonstration of our side fighting itself.

With this object lesson before them, how long will it be before other Asians stick their necks out in such hazardous undertakings?

In Malaya and Indo-China, where Communist armies are in action, and in Hong Kong, on whose borders Communist armies are poised, live thousands of Chinese military and intellectual refugees from Communism; they fled rather than submit, and their whole careers evidence their determination to resist.

You would think that some way could be found to enable these people to harass our common enemy. The Communists have shown how it can be done, using such expedients as fronts and volunteers. Nobody in his right mind would expect us to go to the costly extreme of rounding up these people and immobilizing them. Yet this is exactly what our side has done. The Indo-Chinese authorities disarmed anti-Communist troops that fled from Red China; in spite of their appeals to be allowed to join the forces fighting Ho Chi-min, these troops were scattered and sent as far away as possible. Chinese with large followings who have pleaded for permission to organize and train men in Malaya have been repulsed. Hong Kong has jailed many people caught trying

to contact guerrilla forces in Red China. What other conclusion can an Asian reach from this but that he is not really supposed to oppose the Communists?

WHAT HAPPENED to a full-length documentary film, *Formosa Today*, is a different sort of incident, but when added to innumerable others, helps expose the pattern. The big theaters of Hong Kong refused to exhibit it, explaining that the colony's Chinese would never go to see it, as the majority were neutral; that most of the others were pro-Communist; and that the political section of the police would understandably object to the film as controversial and liable to create a disturbance.

The frustrated movie agent found a Chinese opera house with an idle afternoon. He advertised a single matinee in one small Chinese-language newspaper. The result was unprecedented. The telephone was kept ringing all day by people trying to reserve seats. The agent, now reinforced, was able to induce two out-of-the-way movie houses to show the film for three days each, and transferred it there.

So sure was everyone that three days of four or five showings in each theater would exhaust all possible audiences that American films were scheduled for the fourth day. But so crowded and enthusiastic was each performance that the American

films were postponed, first one day, then more. After ten days in one theater, and eleven in the other, the two film houses were forced by previous commitments to go back to their original schedules.

The film was then transferred to sweltering, uncomfortable neighborhood theaters. This was when I heard about it, from Chang Kuo-sin, a United Press correspondent, whose book, *Eight Months Behind the Bamboo Curtain*, printed in Hong Kong soon after the mainland fell, never reached the American public, while books glossing over Chinese Communist excesses were receiving nationwide propaganda backing.

"There's a secret movie hit in this city," he remarked. "The English-language press has given it no attention, and it's almost the same in the Chinese-language press. But it's playing to crowded houses, and the audiences cheer Chiang Kai-shek each time he appears."

This sounded fantastic, so I went to see for myself. I found the film in a long, narrow, old-fashioned neighborhood showhouse, where all the seats were hard wood. The audience was markedly working class. People gripped their seats tensely. Sure enough, when Chiang appeared there was loud applause, and no booing.

The film wasn't a particularly interesting one. If I hadn't been reporting on it I shouldn't have stayed through. A tedious documentary, it showed the economic

and military life of the island — sugar refineries, Chiang Kai-shek reviewing troops and tanks, power plants, forest preserves, and rice paddies. I couldn't imagine anyone coming to see it, much less staying through it all, if he weren't anti-Communist to start with, and was seeing what he wanted to believe: that a base existed somewhere which might some day help to liberate his country.

The film went from movie house to movie house for months, a secret box-office hit, but much more than that. This was a public opinion poll on the sentiments of a typical overseas Chinese community. An extraordinarily large fraction of the Chinese population of Hong Kong must have deliberately gone to see a film that they knew was pro-Nationalist and anti-Mao Tse-tung. Here, in the protective silence of the movie house, they were able to give expression to their hopes.

This should have been most encouraging to the local authorities, for it showed that their 2,000,000 Chinese inhabitants, far from being neutral or pro-Communist, wanted to be on our side. Yet the English persisted in pessimistically telling you that if the Communists attacked, the local Chinese either would do nothing, or would help the invader. Actually, if the Communists did take Hong Kong, it would be by default, as the result of their convincing the Chinese inhabitants

that nothing could be done about it, and that the West couldn't be depended upon. After all, this and not the merits of the Communists was responsible for most of the Red victories; this was how cities such as Canton fell without a shot being fired.

Each Chinese who came to see *Formosa Today* knew vaguely that it was under some form of official disapproval, and that the sentiments expressed were contrary to official policy. Obviously, this made a boomerang out of what should have been a propaganda victory.

**T**HEN THERE IS the example of the two rival holidays, October 1 marking the establishment of the Communist regime at Peiping, and October 10, the traditional Double Tenth of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's republic. These provide a gauge of Chinese political sentiment.

Last October 1, the business center of Hong Kong, occupied by the major British and Chinese shipping and mercantile firms, was a sea of Chinese Communist flags. I joined a group of Chinese newspapermen in a tour of the city. When we left the big business section we also left the red flags. Few were to be seen in the Chinese residential sections.

A group of Chinese editors gave a freedom dinner that day to challenge the Communists. This was something our side might have been expected to welcome. Police ordered

it terminated and the sponsors were put on the grill for having invited foreign correspondents. Anti-Communists living in the refugee camps on the other side of the harbor were stopped from crossing over.

Next day, the British-owned press ran front-page stories that took it for granted the pro-Peiping demonstration had been city-wide and spontaneous; it disposed of the freedom dinner in a few buried lines. This was followed next day with an editorial actually rebuking the Chinese who had succeeded in voicing anti-Peiping sentiments at the Red demonstrations!

October 10, the Nationalist holiday, came along and there were no Chinese republican flags in the business center of the city; none at all. Outside, in the workers' quarters, I saw tens of thousands of Nationalist flags. They weren't the big cloth flags that the big business houses could afford; they were generally of plain paper, the kind distributed by newsboys, or sold for a couple of coppers.

Such a token of resistance to Communist propaganda might properly have been expected to encourage the authorities charged with preserving Hong Kong's freedom. Not so. The British-owned press gave the story a modest inside position, in significant contrast to the prominence given the October 1 affair.

What was the humble Asian to think about this? If such powerful

elements apparently sided with, or had grown reconciled to, Communism, surely the little Asian should climb on the bandwagon, too.

In the nearby Portuguese colony of Macao, students in Chinese high schools successfully defied Communist efforts to make them support germ warfare and atrocity charges against the Americans. A few noses were bloodied. Thereupon "comfort missions" were sent to the schools by local Communist-run organizations; and these supported the Red students groups with a series of exaggerated demands. The Portuguese authorities let pressure be put on the anti-Communist youngsters to apologize and knuckle under. Since then, of course, there has been no further resistance by the students to Communist classroom control. How many of them have learned this lesson for life?

About this time, Portuguese police who dared stop a virulent Communist propaganda movie were threatened by the Red radio. The Portuguese authorities backed down again, a cash "comfort fund" was given to the aggrieved movie house staff, and the censored portions were restored. When are these subordinate police going to censor another Communist movie?

**W**HAT ARE ASIANS EXPECTED to deduce from incidents such as these? They already witnessed the all-out campaign by Peiping de-

manding General MacArthur's dismissal. The Asian people don't know the details of this case as it is known in America; they only know that Peiping insisted that MacArthur be fired, and that he was fired.

One would have to search far and wide to find anything so detrimental to Asian morale as the whole disgraceful prisoners-of-war scandal in Korea. What haunts Asian minds is the knowledge that only the accident of the capture of an American general enabled the press to expose the true situation in the camps. Hardened Communist agitators, deliberately infiltrated among the captured Chinese prisoners for this purpose, were able to dominate our P.O.W. camps, browbeating and murdering those unwilling to further Communist ends. "The guards have little or no control over what goes on inside," and the bodies of the slain non-Reds were victoriously passed out to them in the mornings, United States soldiers frankly admitted. Such camps were listed as unanimously desiring repatriation to Red China, although it was evident, if only from the number of P.O.W.'s beaten up or slain, that many were anti-Peiping.

When General Ridgway left his U.N. Command in Tokyo to take over Allied forces in Europe, he gave a farewell interview that was widely published. He spoke a great deal about Communist insincerity and lies — no news to Asians — and

then said something that did mean something new to these people. There might be a chance, he hopefully said, that the list of 70,000 Chinese and North Korean prisoners who had said they would not "forcibly resist" being returned to Communist China or North Korea, could be increased by a "re-screening" process.

What else could this mean to the Asians than that the Americans didn't want these people to be on our side, and were trying to dissuade those who surrendered in response to our appeals and promises, to please go back to their Communist masters and take their punishment? This was confirmed some weeks later when dispatches said that a new screening had raised the total to 78,000, and that even more names might be added!

Much disquieting information about the American role in Korea has come out in the British Parliament's question period; these disclosures tend to increase the Asian people's feeling of betrayal. How, for instance, are they to understand this statement by Foreign Secretary Eden:

"There was no desire on the part of the United Nations Command to increase the number of prisoners who did not want to return. On the contrary, our desire being to get an agreement and to get our people out, the whole onus of wish, if I may so express it, on our part was that there

should be as few of these as possible."

Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of State, expressed it more succinctly — and callously:

"From the very beginning it was appreciated that the question of repatriation would be a difficult matter. It was obvious that some prisoners of war would not want to return, but also it was quite obvious that the more who did not want to return the greater would be the embarrassment to the United Nations Command. We wanted as few as possible to opt to stay in South Korea, and during the screening every endeavor was made to persuade as many as possible to agree to return. . . .

"I repeat again that as far as the United Nations Command are concerned" — at that time this meant only the Americans — "every interest of theirs lay in assuring that at the conclusion there should be as few of these people as possible who did not want to go."

**W**E WOULD HAVE to go far to find a more flagrant example of our forgetting that what looks one way to us may look entirely different to another fellow abroad. Moscow's international politicians are trained to exploit this. Ours make cataclysmic blunder after blunder by talking as if we were still in the age of couriers and clipper ships.

We forget that an impression has the same effect as a fact, if believed

in. By the time something else has happened, a propaganda result has been achieved. This is the realm of thought warfare, in which we have been licked continuously, because the enemy knows how to utilize a wish or a stalemate situation as if it were a victory.

By forgetting that this is psychological warfare, we say and do things that dishearten, antagonize, and alienate the Asians. Communist Russia, on the contrary, never forgets this factor, and chooses her words and deeds for their effect on other people. We make believe that others aren't listening to what is not intended for their ears. This may be good sportsmanship, or good decorum, but the other side doesn't know it.

What were Asians to think, for instance, of the following, as related by United Press?

"The U.N. delegate in the Panmunjon truce tent told North Korean Communist General Nam Il that the questions used by the United Nations in the screening of war prisoners were designed to 'encourage a maximum of prisoners to return to your side, and not to oppose their return.'"

We permitted the Chinese Communists repeatedly to broadcast promises of an amnesty to the P.O.W.'s, if only they would return to Red China. Secret police in China at that time already were rounding up relatives and friends of those who



had shown a desire not to go back — their names had been passed into Red China by agents.

We facilitated those broadcasts, and so in Asian minds we stood morally behind those promises, which everybody knew would no more be observed than any other pledges made by the Communists. No matter what the outcome, the knowledge cannot be erased from Asian minds that all along we stressed that only those insisting they would “forcibly resist repatriation” would not be returned to Communist hands.

This continued to be our policy to the weary end, as we can see in the case of the recently proposed “face-saving” plan by which the lists of P.O.W.’s would be made over, in a manner, the Associated Press reported, that would enable “the Communists to proclaim that they got back all Red ‘war prisoners,’ as they have persistently demanded.”

**Y**ET WE SHOULD certainly be able to understand by now that the Communists aren’t interested in war prisoners as individuals. Whether they get back this or that particular Chinese or Korean isn’t the point. What is important to them is to strengthen the impression that anyone who leaves the Red side, either willingly or by compulsion, will inevitably find himself back again in Communist hands, and woe betide

him then! To allow the Reds to tell the Asian people that they have succeeded in this was exactly what Peiping and Moscow wanted. The mere fact that we were willing to agree to this so-called “face-saving” is what worries the Asians, not whether we were able to put this particular plan across or not. Next time it might be them.

On top of this, we went out of our way to let the world know that, far from rebutting the Communist accusations and smears, we abstained from being specific on so-called controversial matters, just as U.S.I.S. libraries in Southeast Asia tactfully abstained from including books that tell specifically what is happening in Communist China. This, after all, is what Asians are most interested in finding out about. There is no such discreetness in the books and pamphlets circulated by Soviet representatives.

A Member of Parliament actually asked the British government to give assurances that “anti-Communist propaganda” was not being given to Chinese and Korean P.O.W.’s. “There is no official attempt to indoctrinate these people,” was the answer. The Asian, who has witnessed the way in which Communist leadership loses no opportunity not only to indoctrinate, but to force its way of thinking on those within its power, by sinister “brain-washing” techniques, will naturally ask, “Why not?”

In Britain's Parliament, too, the information was given out that nobody who had been connected with the Chinese Nationalists was allowed to be an interpreter, or to do political education work in Korea, or to have anything to do with those who had been under Communist control. Yet who else in Asia has had the experience of the Nationalists in dealing with the Communists, and who could be as effective with one Chinese as another Chinese?

**T**HIS DEFEATISM on our part, this rebuffing of our friends, which has enabled the Reds to win by default and not by their own merits, did not happen overnight. It grew up over the years, reaching the point where any Asian who praised the American way of life was regarded by Stalinist-influenced administrators as "unobjective" and downright crude, and passed over when we had jobs or assistance to give out.

This was aided by the illusion that tolerance meant belittling yourself, seeing good only on the other side. This illusion apparently lay behind the spectacle put on by a member of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's party in Pakistan. A young woman guest, a native, mentioned that she hoped to go to America to continue her education. Oh no, don't do that, this man told her, and gave her a long harangue on American discrimination and American discomforts. For-

tunately, an American Negro, merely a guest, interrupted to defend American life, explaining that along with the great good went a comparatively little bad, that progress was being made all the time, and there were opportunities for all.

The editor of a Chinese Communist newspaper, whom I had known in previous days, one night answered my question, "How did you get that way?" We were sitting up late after dinner. "I was a student, with fine marks and a good knowledge of English," he began. "Your country was giving out a number of scholarships, and I applied. I was rejected. There wasn't a person among those accepted who had anything like my knowledge of English, or my friendly feelings toward the United States. I asked the American lady in charge of the scholarship program why she had skipped me over."

His hurt and humiliation still showed in his voice. "I am restricting my selection to those who would be in danger from the Kuomintang if they remained in China," she informed me.

"Every one of the young men she selected" — and here he stopped to name each, and what job he held now, so deeply had this incident affected him — "is back in China today, serving the Communists, using what you taught them to fight you the more."

How often I've sat among Chinese friendly to us — people who receive

flattering offers from Peiping to return and serve Red China, who frequently don't know where their next meal or bed might come from — and have heard them ask in dismay how it was that they weren't able to land a job with the Americans, while those who boasted of their so-called neutrality, or actually opposed the United States, were showered with favors. This might have been simply high-minded tolerance on our part, but it was hard for those friendly Asians to understand it that way.

**T**HE MOST IMPORTANT practical decision any Asian has to make is: the democratic world or Communism? He isn't being given much time to decide. He knows that the Chinese Communists talk only of an "all-Asia front," with Korea, Malaya, Indo-China, and the Philippines as merely sectors on that long front. If Red China is here to stay, he knows that this is tantamount to saying that all Asia will become Red.

So his reaction can easily be imagined when he hears even the Churchill government saying that it is only biding its time in the matter of bringing Red China into the Security Council, and that its pro-Peiping pressure is merely being "postponed" while the Korean negotiations go on. Even if events make the postponement permanent, Communism will have gained the

propaganda battle, as it had in the case of Britain's long-offered recognition of Red China, which Peiping has ignored for a couple of years in the most insolent manner.\*

The Asian's sceptical or negative attitude toward us may be understood, too, when he hears Labor chieftains in England, through party big wigs such as Herbert Morrison and John Strachey, warn publicly that as soon as they return to power, they will do all they can to bring Peiping into the U.N. The Asian is constantly reading statements by Indian government heads that Red China "is here to stay." He heard Pandit Nehru inform his parliament that India would not help the free world in a pinch. "I should like an ever wider area in this world — in Asia, let us say — of countries which decide that they will not enter war, that whatever happens, they will not enter the area of warfare, they will try at least to restrict the warfare to other regions. . . ."

"If you say there is a war on today, we are neutral. If you say there is a cold war, we are certainly neutral. . . . We do not propose to join that war. It does not matter who is right and who is wrong. . . ."

What, then, does matter?

The most powerful card that Communism plays is the impression it is able to spread in a very personal way that its retribution can be de-

\* See Edward Hunter, "The Suicide of Recognizing Red China," *May, 1952*.

layed but never avoided, that it is the impersonal wave of the future.

MOSCOW CONSIDERS ITSELF at war; in this new kind of warfare the enemy keeps his eyes on the objective rather than the means, and regards anything that helps to win as a weapon. The weapon may range from a leaflet or a churchman to a prostitute or a bullet, anything that changes a man's attitude, by sweet persuasion or brute force. Old-fashioned warfare, in which only death-dealing and city-destroying tools were used, is too expensive for this modern imperialism. A dead man can't labor; a demolished city can't produce machines; a ruined and desolated countryside can't grow food.

This is psychological warfare, and old-fashioned warfare is merely a part of it. Moscow's whole emphasis is on what makes all these weapons work — propaganda pressures. Moscow never would tolerate the series of psychological errors of which we have been guilty, for Moscow is maneuvering so that the satellite peoples will bear the brunt of the

fighting for her, seeking to cut the enemy — mainly ourselves — down to size, so that she can come in later with the *coup de grâce*.

That we have any friends left is a tribute to the essential justice of our cause, and the inherent evil of the Communist side. Even when we do the right thing in a big way, we do it so late and after so much criticism that it appears to be forced and niggardly. If the Communists have been able to go so far with false promises that answer the yearnings of broad masses of people, without either the ability or the intention to fulfil them, how much farther could we go if we utilized our own tactics fearlessly, telling the truth boldly, and reinforcing it with a healthy and frank power!

Until we do, the Asian can be expected to follow a neutrality that is against ourselves, or to feel that the only course left him is to give in, go along with the Communists. It can be demonstrated that such a course is self-defeating and foolish for Asia — but we don't demonstrate it. It still remains a question: "Whom are we fighting?"

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